Ned K. Johnson
1951

The University of Nevada Biological Expedition to Ash Meadows, Nye County, Nevada.
(June 12-26, 1951

My Battered Field Notes

June 12, 1951

Our party of six left Reno at 6 AM and drove 400 + miles in a 1½ ton army truck to Ash Meadows in the southern tip of Nye County. We arrived at our camp, the Fairbank's Springs Ranch House (abandoned) at about 7 P.M. A lone coyote was seen loping across the alkali flat 1 mi. S.W. of camp. Texas Nighthawks were busily foraging over the meadows. About ten were seen. The wildlife of the area had taken advantage of the deserted sheds and houses of the camp and nests of the Say Phoebe, Western Kingbird, and English Sparrow were located in or close to the structures. Bullock Orioles had woven a nest [illegible] a Fremont Cottonwood near the main [illegible] In addition to the cottonwoods th[illegible] mesquite and ash trees growing at the camp with willows nearby. The northern part of the Meadows consists mostly of alkali flats (shadscale [Atriplex] dominating) with much saltgrass, mesquite thickets, cottonwood stands, wet meadows, and tule (?) marshes. Several lots were collected with

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an insect net about 11 PM that evening. Apparently, they had roosted in the houses and were easily netted as they ~~have~~ fluttered through the small rooms.

Our party consists of the following men:

1. Frank Richardson, vertebrate zoologist, who will study birds.

2. Ira La Rivers, who will study insects, fish, and reptiles.

3. Benjamin H. Banta, who will study reptiles and amphibians.

4. W. Verne Woodbury, who will study mammals.

5. Ted C. Frantz, who will study insects and fish.

6. Ned K. Johnson who will study birds and bats.

~~[illegible]~~

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Ash Meadows, Nye Co., Nevada 2200'

List of species seen with approximate numbers present — between Fairbanks Springs Ranch House and the mesquite thickets 2 mi. S.W.

1. Red-winged Blackbird 30
2. Mourning Dove 3
3. Ash-throated Flycatcher 2 (1 coll)
4. ~~? Flycatcher~~ (Empidonax) 1
5. Vermilion Flycatcher 4 (1 coll., not pres.)
6. ~~? Gull~~ 1
7. Marsh Hawk 1
8. ~~Red-tailed Hawk~~ 1 (?)
9. Swainson Hawk 1
10. Killdeer 5
11. Western Kingbird 25
12. Western Meadowlark 2 (1 young)
13. Western Mockingbird 6 (1 coll.)
14. Texas Nighthawk 12 (1 coll.)
15. Bullock Oriole 6 (1 shot, could not obtain)
16. Say Phoebe 5
17. Poorwill 1 (Coll.) (too poor to pres.)
18. Clark Nutcracker !!! 1
19. Gambel Quail 3
20. Raven 6
21. Savannah Sparrow 3

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22. Verdin 1
23. English Sparrow 2

Species Found Nesting

1. Say Phoebe 2 nests
2. Western Kingbird 4 "
3. English Sparrow 1 "
4. Vermilion Flycatcher 1 "
5. Bullock Oriole 1 "

After today's field work the Western Kingbird deserves special mention. This species was very abundant in all areas visited where mesquite or other tall trees offered vantage points for insect-catching or territorial sentry duty. Usually the highest dead twig of the tree is selected. Kingbirds seemed quick to attack intruders ~~flying~~ coming too near the territory of this flycatcher. A Swainson Hawk was mobbed by four Western Kingbirds as he flew over the mesquite several hundred feet over the ground. The unusual presence of the Clark Nutcracker in Ash Meadows was made known to me by two Kingbirds which were observed closely pursuing ~~the~~ a lone individual over a wet meadow. The kingbirds around camp were extremely voracious

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nest defenders against both the Say Phoebe and the Vermilion Flycatcher.

A single poorwill was flushed from beneath a mesquite about 10 A.M. It fluttered only a few feet before it lit on a piece of wood which was lying in the sun.

A pair of Vermilion Flycatchers constructed their nest in a willow tree in a boggy meadow. A young bird was discovered in a willow thicket nearby, perched motionless and concealed among the leaves.

The territories of Gambel's Quail were noticeably well separated. I encountered several males at appreciable distances apart, each bird calling from the tops of mesquite trees.

The single Verdin seen was quite active and difficult to approach closely. It foraged quickly through willows and mesquites as it uttered its call note.

A brilliant male Vermilion Flycatcher was observed to dart from its conspicuous perch in a willow to snap down a red + blue dragonfly, a prey which, although bulky, was easily transported back to headquarters on the dead twig.

Although Western Meadowlarks are relatively uncommon in the meadowlands near camp, a few are present. A single fledgling was frightened from the tall grass near a pool.

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June 14, 1951

From J. Spr. Ranch House to 2 mi. S - S.E.

New species seen

1. Brewer Blackbird	2	
2. Blue Grosbeak	2	(Coll 2)
3. Indigo Bunting	1	(Coll. 1)
4. Turkey Vulture	4	
5. Bittern	1	
6. Sparrow Hawk	1	
7. Western Wood Pewee	1	(Coll 1)
8. Western Flycatcher	1	

Out collecting by 6:30 A.M. today. Killdeer and Savannah Sparrows were active in the meadows near camp. The buzzy trill of the latter species was often heard during the day whenever marshes or grassy meadows were studied. A single Bittern flew easily from the tules and coursed to thicker marshes toward the east. An interesting thicket of tall mesquite and willows was located near an area of sand dunes (covered with very scrubby mesquite). Several Verdins foraged in this thicket, usually in the uppermost boughs. A globular nest, apparently of the Verdin was constructed among the hanging dead twigs of a large mesquite. Close examination was

possible since it was but four feet above the ground. The nest seem to be in good condition and ready for eggs. Various dead grasses and twigs composed the structure.

The Blue Grosbeak was also present in the thicket. A male was collected which, because of its only partial blue coloration about the head, was believed to be a bird of first year breeding condition. Its song was a series of three warbles in succession, somewhat suggestive of the beginning of the song of the House Finch.

The most important find of the day, however, was a small, slender bird which was first heard singing from the top of a tall mesquite. Its wariness was immediately apparent, since attempts to collect it by close approach only forced the bird to fly in a bee-line for another tall mesquite, where it would again sing. Frank R. had thus attempted to collect the bird for some time but was unsuccessful, as the bird kept out of gun range. Through our combined efforts I was lucky to collect it, though, as Frank drove it my direction. A beautiful male Indigo Bunting, familiar to me

only through what I had read of its presence in the eastern states! Apparently, this specimen is the first known from Nevada. Upon dissection it was found that the testes of the bird were in excellent, enlarged breeding condition. ~~Could an isolated nesting colony of this species be located in Ash Meadows?~~ Frank was positive he saw at least one other bird of the same species, at first with the individual collected. (Species Account)

Earlier ~~later~~ in the morning both the Poorwill and the Lesser Nighthawk were found roosting close together on a hard-baked alkali flat with scattered mesquite and thistles present. Each bird had a strong urge to return to the ground even after being flushed several times. Their protective coloration helped but little on the dazzling white of the alkali surface.

A single Western Flycatcher inhabits the Fremont Cottonwood near the W. side of the house at camp. No nest has yet been found of this species.

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June 15, 1951

New species seen:

1. Warbling Vireo
2. Traill's Flycatcher

From F. Spr. Ranch House to 1 mi. SE's S

Up at 5:45 AM. Single Warbling Vireo flitted into the Screw-bean Mesquite at the camp. Not much observed for some time in the early morning hours until a young male Blue Grosbeak was heard singing, & was subsequently collected.

Gambel's Quail were active among the mesquite. For the first time I was able to see and closely approach females of this species. The birds were easily stalked and on two occasions pairs of females were flushed from a few feet from where I stood and flew about fifty yards before again taking cover in the Atriplex undercover. Males were heard calling repeatedly in the distance.

Western Kingbirds were again seen commonly in all habitats where tall mesquite (screw-bean) occurred. Their varied notes often caused me to stop and listen for an apparently new species. Birds

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in general were noticeably scarcer today than during the previous two days, and few new species were observed.

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June 16, 1951
From 1 mi. S. camp to 1 mi. SW. camp.
New Species seen Today:

1. Horned Lark.

Up at 5:15 and in the field by 5:35. Horned larks were present on the alkali flats.
The note of the Western Flycatcher was heard:

psee-eep rising tone.

A pair of these flycatchers have been present at camp during our stay here. I suspect nesting, but none has been discovered. Unlike the other flycatchers near camp, this species doesn't frequent conspicuous perches while feeding, but remains within the thick foliage of the cottonwoods, from where it can quickly dart out and return to its hidden roost. Their flight is very jerky and darting from one perch to another, thus making the bird difficult to follow and observe. Away from the cottonwoods at camp the Western Flycatchers have been seen only in shady willow and honey mesquite thickets near streams. The Traill's Flycatcher has been noted in this habitat also.

The Trail's, however, has been quiet during all observations, thus no voice information has been obtained.

Today the Bullock's Oriole seemed particularly abundant in the mesquite scattered in the Atriplex. Several nests were noted. I have found that the male bird is seldom present near the nest, but that the female is always nearby. One female oriole was noted carrying insects in its bill, presumably to young.

As was typical of the preceeding days, Western Kingbirds were common and several more nests were located. One nest was neatly woven in a dead screw-bean Mesquite located near a wet pasture. The tree was surrounded by Thistles and Salt grass. Since the nest was only seven feet from the ground, I was able to examine the contents — four pinkish-white eggs with purple blotches. ~~The~~ One parent didn't care for my presence and it was not until I hugs some distance away that the bird discontinued its regular dives for my head.

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June 17, 1951

To an extensive thicket of Fremont Cottonwood, Arizona Ash, and Screw-bean Mesquite — 5 mi. S. Fairbanks Springs Ranch House (camp).

No new species observed today. Immediately upon entrance into the thicket, the warble of the Blue Grosbeak was noted. The resemblance of this warble to the evening caroling of Robins was considered, although Frank C. thought the Black-headed Grosbeaks song was very similar to the Blue's. The most abundant species of the area was the Killdeer. Possibly 5 pairs were present on the small ranch. Either nests or young birds were in the small clearings at various intervals in the meadows, as was indicated by the adults, which flew about excitedly calling. Some birds tried the crippled effect in order to lure me from their secret. Searchings of the immediate area failed to disclose any nests or young.

Several Verdins had taken refuge in a very dense thicket of Screw-bean Mesquite near a small stream. The trees averaged perhaps fifteen feet in height, and the Verdins usually were above ten feet in the thicker

foliage.

Although Castilleja (Paintbrush) was commonly in bloom here, no hummingbirds were present.

A single Verdin nest was discovered in the hanging limbs of a tall mesquite. We did not disturb the contents even though they could have easily been reached.

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June 18, 1951

From 2 mi. S to 2 mi SW Fairbanks Springs Ranch House.

New Birds seen today:
1. Rough-winged Swallow (2) coll. 1
2. Yellow Warbler (1)

Up at 5:00 AM. with a Yellow Warbler singing from a Fremont Cottonwood at camp. It flew to the large tamarisk where Frank R. collected it. It is strange that this species is not more common here. A pair of Rough-winged Swallows were racing over the meadows and flats at camp also. I collected one as it perched on a barbed-wire fence wire.

We then drove to the large thicket 2 mi. S. camp. The vegetation here consisted of Screw-bean and Honey Mesquite in bunched groups and also scattered. Atriplex was present as undercover, with scattered grape vines mixed in. Blue Grosbeaks were singing by 6:15 and Verdins were also chipping. Except for an occasional Gambel Quail or Say Phoebe, no birds were seen until about 7:30 when the Ash-throated Flycatchers, Bullock Orioles, and Western Kingbirds started to vocalize. Bullock

Orioles seemed to be the most abundant species with females appearing more numerous than males. Orioles also were usually found in the scattered screw-bean Mesquite, rather than in the more dense thickets. Willows were commonly associated with the Screw-bean Mesquite which contained oriole nests.

A ½ mile walk west over sand dunes and arid flats brought me to a fine stand of Fremont Cottonwoods, large Ashes, and Tamarisk. A few scattered Horned larks were noted along the way, flying high and straight while uttering their characteristic note. Several Audubon Cottontails + Black-tailed Jackrabbits had moved into the area of abandoned ranch dwellings. These animals seemed particularly tame when approached slowly, and would only trot a few feet before sitting motionless on their haunches, watching me cautiously for several seconds before again loping off. A few pair of English Sparrows were nesting 40 feet above the ground near Bullock Oriole nests.

That afternoon we journeyed to the southern part of the Meadows and camped in a grassy clearing ¼ mi E. of the Ash Meadows Ranch-Q. At the set of the sun three Turkey Vultures

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lazily flapped and soared their way over the dense Screw-bean Mesquite stands. Possibly these individuals roosted together in the immediate vicinity. Our most important find, however, was the sight of a Horned Owl flying in the light of dusk toward the east. Attempts to "call" the bird proved unsuccessful, perhaps because of the disturbing wind which numbed our whistles and squeaks.

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June 19, 1951

Up about 5:30 A.M. to the whistle of the Mourning Dove: whoo-who-who-who-who-who-who slowly

The dense Mesquite thickets in this part of the valley harbored many birds. In many places the Screw-bean Mesquite was the only vegetation other than Saltgrass. Verdins and Blue Grosbeaks were, as usual, present in the foliage of the dense mesquites.

The first birds I saw this morning surprised me the most, however. They were two White-throated Swifts rocketing over the trees at remarkable speed. It is unbelievable at how fast this bird could fly from one end of the Ash Meadows Range to the other with no apparent effort. Attempts to collect these amazing birds were, as would be expected, unsuccessful.

A single Black-headed Grosbeak was collected from a dense Mesquite. Its quietness was surprising and no female bird was present. A few Ash-throated Flycatchers were present near the edges of

the thickets, usually conspicuously perched on the outer twigs.
Bullock's Orioles were abundant on the ranch, and many pairs were noted nesting. In a pair of tall Fremont Cottonwoods at least 6 nests were counted, all of which contained eggs or young as stated by the adult birds. A brilliant male Vermilion Flycatcher was foraging from shrubby Honey Mesquite. It seemed to prefer the lower branches near the outermost portions of the tree for perches. A single Western Flycatcher was collected from a shady grove of Mesquite, both Screw-bean & Honey.
We then drove 1/2 mi. N. to the Libbs Ranch where Mr. Verne Woolbury had seen a pair of Phainopepla. We easily located the birds and obtained the female. The species has actions noticeably similar to flycatchers while feeding. Mrs. Libbs told Frank R. that Roadrunners were occasional on her ranch and that she had seen one there two days ago (June 17).
After driving back to Death Valley Junction we headed again for Fairbanks Springs Ranch House, at 2 mi. S. W.

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of camp a Swainson Hawk was discovered on the nest 15 feet above the ground in a Fremont Cottonwood. As we approached the bird left the nest immediately and soared northward. The white wing linings in contrast to the dark flight feathers were a distinctive mark for the species.

A Loggerhead Shrike was collected from its conspicuous perch on the top of a ten-foot Honey Mesquite. Upon examination of the tree a nest with 4 eggs was located. The worn feathers on the breast of the bird indicated that it had been incubating.

New species seen today:

1. White-throated Swift
2. Black-headed Grosbeak
3. Phainopepla
4. Loggerhead Shrike

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June 20, 1951

Upat 5:30, Drove NE to search for a dry lake, but did not find it. We returned to camp and prepared for a journey to Olympia, where we left at 9:AM. On the way we stopped at Devil's Hole. Down deep in the crack a narrow cave was found. A pair of Barn Owls flew from the cave! Many pellets were found, and a nest was probably situated back in the narrow crevice, but we could not hear or see any young or see any eggs. From Devil's Hole we drove 5 mi SE. Turned to Ranch House to a desert playa lake. Here a pair of Desert Sparrows were found. The entire area consisted of scrub-lean Mesquite, Tree Mesquite, and Atriplex in dense thickets or scattered. A pair of Roadrunners with one young were found and the young was collected. Their habit of perching on the topmost twig of the mesquites made them easily seen from a distance, but not so easily approached.

Black Throated Flycatchers, Verdins, Bullock's Orioles, and Western Kingbirds

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were also present at this dry lake. Frank R. collected a Crissal's Thrasher but I was unable to find any.

We left the dry lake the way we came past Devil's Hole, and then drove southward to the Ash Meadows Ranch, where the Cahrums Road strikes off to the east. We drove 3 miles when 2 Crissal Thrashers were seen in thick, lonely Honey Mesquite at the edge of the road. This conspicuous habit of raising and spreading the tail and flashing white tips made them very noticeable. They disappeared when we made efforts to collect. About 2 miles further east on the same road another Crissal Thrasher was seen, busily hopping about near the bases of the Creosote bushes. No mesquite or other large vegetation was nearby. Only Creosote and Burro-bush (Franseria) was growing where the thrasher was found.

We continued on some 17 miles into Cahrums Valley to the Cahrums Ranch. A dozen and several Black-throated Finches were seen here.

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At the Ash Meadows Ranch-O a family of Gambel Quail was observed near the road. Both parents and 8 or ten chicks were scurrying beneath a large Screw-bean Mesquite.

New birds seen today:

1. Barn Owl (2)
2. Desert Sparrow (2)
3. Crissal Thrasher (3)
4. House Finch (5)

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June 21, 1951

New species seen today:

1. Cliff Swallow (3)
2. Barn Swallow (2)
3. Bewick Wren (5) Coll. 1
4. Sage (2) Sparrow (1) Coll. 1
5. Cinnamon Teal (2)
6. Great Blue Heron (1)
7. Prairie Falcon (1)
8. Wooded Oriole (1)

Also saw the following.

1. Mockingbird 10
2. Blue Grosbeak 3
3. English Sparrow 10
4. Traill Flycatcher 6 Coll. 1
5. Brewer Blackbird 2
6. Red-winged Blackbird 10
7. Mourning Dove 30
8. Vermilion Flycatcher 3 Coll. 1
9. Bullock Oriole (20)
10. Gambel Quail (many heard)
11. Ring-necked Pheasant (sev. heard)
12. Yellow Warbler (2)
13. Turkey Vulture (4)
14. Savannah Sparrow (5)
15. Killdeer (12)
16. Western Kingbird (20)

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17. Ash-throated Flycatcher (3)
18. Say Phoebe (3)
19. Western Meadowlark (3)
20. Verdin (rev. heard)

Today's field work was concentrated in the fields ½ to 1 mi. SW Pahrump Ranch, Nye County.

Up at 4:20 AM. Both kinds of swallows listed were coursing over the meadows and fields of cotton. Mourning Doves were especially abundant through the mesquite and willow thickets along pasture streams. Their tameness was surprising and I had many opportunities to collect specimens, but didn't.

A lone Prairie Falcon was flying east over the mesquite with powerful wing strokes.

Mockingbirds were noticeably more tame in this area of more intense habitation than at Ash Meadows.

A pair of Cinnamon Teal were found on a small pond. When approached, they immediately sprang into the air and left the area.

The most significant find

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of the day was brought to my attention by Frank R., who reported observing the Hooded Oriole earlier in the day. About 5:30 a single male Hooded Oriole flew past camp. At Frank's suggestion we waited beneath a row of palms where he had seen the bird fly earlier. Sure enough, the Oriole appeared. I missed, Frank didn't, thus he had the honor of preserving the specimen, which honor was perhaps deservedly his, since he had missed his chance before. Apparently the birds are nesting here in Palms Valley, a nesting record not previously known.

The song of the Traill's Flycatcher coming from the dense willow thickets along the pasture stream was recorded as follows:

wheet-wheedial

run together, declining in pitch

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(27)

1½ mi. SW Pahrump Ranch. June 22, 1951

New species seen for Pahrump Valley

1. Swainson Hawk 2 Nesting with young
2. Desert Sparrow 4
3. White-winged Dove 2
4. Sparrow Hawk 1
5. Western Flycatcher 2
6. Violet-green Swallow 2
7. Vaux Swift 1
8. Cowbird 1
9. Horned Lark 4

Other species seen with abundance

1. Mourning Dove 75 1 nest with young
2. Brewer Blackbird 2
3. Red-winged Blackbird 10
4. House Finch 25 (Coll. 1)
5. Cliff Swallow 1 (Coll 1.)
6. Blue Grosbeak 5 (Coll 1)
7. Bewicks Wren 4
8. Ash-throated Flycatcher 1
9. Sage Sparrow 5 (Coll. 1)
10. Western Kingbird 25
11. Traill Flycatcher 2
12. Killdeer 10
13. Mockingbird 5
14. English Sparrow 10
15. Bullock Oriole 29
16. Western Meadowlark 3
17. Yellow Warbler 1
18. Gambel Quail 10
19. Verdin 3

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(28)

June 22, 1951

To the row of cottonwoods 1 mi. SW Johnson Ranch to 1½ mi. W. of the Ranch.

The area visited this morning was much the same as that visited yesterday. The abundance of the Mourning Dove was perhaps the most unusual incident. Apparently, the row of Fremont Cottonwoods near the wheat field contained many nests of this dove. The birds were curiously tame in many cases, and collecting would have been simply a matter of how many specimens been desired.

A single Vaux's Swift was seen flittering high above the cotton fields about 10:30 A.M.

The cottonwoods also were occupied by a beautiful pair of Swainson's Hawks (see species account).

A pair of White-winged Doves were seen with many Mourning Doves at the edge of the wheat field that afternoon (see species account).

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June 23, 1951

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2 to 3 miles NW Pahrump Ranch,
Pahrump Valley, Nye Co., Nevada

New species for Pahrump Valley:

1. Crissal Thrasher 2
2. Phainopepla 1 ♂
3. Western Gnatcatcher 2
4. Roadrunner 1
5. Texas Nighthawk

Other species seen:

1. Ash-throated Flycatcher 1
2. Say Phoebe Coll. 1.
3. Western Flycatcher 1
4. Desert Sparrow 5
5. Bewick Wren 3
6. Sage Sparrow 4 (?)
7. Western Kingbird 10
8. Mourning Dove 20
9. Cowbird 4
10. Bullock Oriole 10
11. Verdin 2

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(30)

June 23, 1951

Desert Sparrows were singing several times during the night. The song is of two notes followed by a trill of lower or higher pitch. During the day this species was most often flushed from the arroyos, from which it flew to the thicker Screw-bean Mesquite trees. None of the individuals was easily approached. When the birds flew into the trees they would quickly flit from twig to twig until they were on the far side of the foliage, making collecting difficult.

The buzzing of the Western Gnatcatcher was heard several times this morning.

Crissal Thrashers were present in the Screw-bean Mesquite here. (See Species Account)

The vegetation of the area was Screw-bean Mesquite in thickets

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quite dense and scattered individual trees surrounded by Atriplex up to four feet high.

A single male Phainopepla in beautiful plumage was seen perched in the tip top of a 20 foot mesquite. It flew from its lofty perch several times to snatch insects from the air in the manner of a flycatcher. The white wing patches were easily visible. The species gave no indications of nesting, since, when disturbed, it flew at least 1/4 mile before again alighting, and flew out of sight on the second flight.

We returned to our main base camp at Fairbanks Spr. Ranch House about 12:30 P.M. The trip to Cabrinos was made by Miranda Richardson, B. A. Banta, and myself.

A Barn Swallow was observed flying near camp at 6:00 P.M. (a new species for the Mdos.

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(32)

June 24, 1951

To the meadows and marshlands 1 mi WSW Fairbanks Springs Ranch House.

Species observed:

1. Western Meadowlark 2
2. Mountain Bluebird 1 found dead by W.V.W.
3. Killdeer 2
4. Red-winged Blackbird 2
5. Cowbird 2 Coll. 1
6. Horned Larks 25 Coll 3
7. Marsh Wrens 2
8. Savannah Sparrow 3 Coll. 1
9. Say Phoebe 1
10. Bullock's Oriole 3

Upat 5:45 (slept late, since it was the last collecting morning). Only significant species found was the Horned larks (see species account). The area was mostly saltgrass and thistle with other small grasses present.

Several Savannah Sparrows were buzzing in the grass by a marshy area

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June 25, 1951

Left the glorified camp at 7:10 and stopped at Devil's Hole. Only 1 Barn Owl was there. A small sack of pellets were gathered from the crevice of the roost. No nest with eggs or young was found.

Left here about 9:15.

Saw two Swainson Hawks and a Raven near the highway about one-half way between Beatty and Goldfield.

Another single Swainson Hawk was flying along the highway 15 miles south of Goldfield.

A Western Kingbird was seen at the highway three miles south of Mina, and a dead juvenile Horned Lark was found on the road 15 mi. S. Hawthorne.

Our party of six arrived in Reno at 3:45 P.M.

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(34)

Swainson Hawk

June 22, 1951
At 1 mi. SW Pahrump Ranch, Pahrump Valley, Nye Co., Nevada.

A large Fremont Cottonwood was found to contain a nest of this hawk built on a horizontal branch about 20 feet above the ground. Frank R. climbed to the nest and discovered two young about a month old.

The beautiful parent birds, circled nearby overhead, frequently screaming Kreeeee - breeeee in a Red-tail Hawks fashion, on a declining pitch.

The adults, however, didn't appear much disturbed when we were in the immediate vicinity of the nest, and would slowly sail away from the area. The bird we thought to be the ♀ because of its larger size, was much darker on the undersurfaces of the wings + body than was the smaller ♂.

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(35)

White-winged Dove

June 22, 1951
1 mi. WSW Pahrump Ranch, Pahrump Valley, Nye Co., Nevada.

An extensive field of ripened wheat attracted hundreds of Mourning Doves to this area. At the edge of the wheat field a pair of White-winged Doves were flushed from the Ettipiex with a few Mourning Doves. They were immediately distinguished from the Mourning Doves by their stockier bodies, fan-tails, and bright white wing stripes. The flapping noise produced by the wings was also distinctive when the doves were flying but not visible. The pair seemed extremely wary, and repeated attempts to collect the birds failed. Frank R. believes their cooing notes to be suggestive of the domestic pigeon

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(36)

Horned Lark

June 24, 1951 — 1/4 mi. S.W. Sp. Ranch House.

In the small flock of 25 observed many first-year birds were noticed (juvenile plumage). The young were much easier approached than groups of adult birds. A small alkali flat with a sparse vegetation of saltgrass was the habitat of the Horned Lark.

A single nest was found (first discovered by W. Vance Woodbury) neatly constructed beneath at tussock of saltgrass. The position of the nest in relation to the mound of dirt supporting the saltgrass was such that shade for the two nestlings was afforded throughout the day.

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Bullock's Oriole

June 18

At 2 mi. SW Fairbanks Springs Ranch House in a thicket of tamarisk and a stand of Fremont Cottonwood and Ash.

A pair of these orioles was closely watched for several minutes while they went through antics unusual for this species. As I approached a ten-foot screw-bean Mesquite a female bird darted out and flew thirty feet to the next nearest tree. Closely following was the male, curiously hopping over the ground near the tree occupied by the female, with its tail cocked up like a wren and its head craned forward, giving the bird a slim, sneaking appearance. The brightly-hued male would continue to approach its mate (?) until a certain distance was reached, when the entire sequence was re-enacted. In the meantime I noted these actions from behind the trunk of an Ash located within thirty feet of the scattered mesquites. No apparent reason for these actions is available, although breeding conditions and nesting activity perhaps affect the actions of orioles even as late as June 18.

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Crissal Thrasher

(38)

June 23, 1951

at mesquite thickets 2 to 3 miles N.W. Pahrump Ranch, Pahrump Valley, Nye Co., Nevada.

Upon arising at 5:30 AM, before sunrise, the song of this species was heard. The song consists of a variety of notes, suggestive of the Mockingbird, but noticeably different. The repetition of phrases in the song was usually only once instead of three or more as in the Mockingbird.

Crissal Thrashers are considerably more wary than other species encountered in this area. One individual was extremely difficult to approach. The bird would fly far ahead of me (at least 100 yards!) and then perch in the top of a Mesquite, where singing commenced. I was unable to get within about 80 yards of the bird, even if I moved slowly and inconspicuously toward it. The striking species was easily visible for a great distance.